10: d'Orleans--275-276 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 101, 173, 197, 563 Ethnic subgroups

"They [LSS: Kha boatmen, in the service of a Laotian.] are easily recognised as Laotians, but they appear inferior and weaker, though they are lively and prepossessing; they originally came from Ban Lasa (near Muong Ngoi), but they call themselves Khamouks, and count seven principal tribes of Kas; but their dialects differ, so that several of them cannot understand each other.

The Kasings (whose language approaches that of the Yaos).
The Khakos.
The Khabits. [276]
The Khakoos.
The Kahoks (who wear cotton drawers as their only garment).
The Khapaï's.
The Khamouks.

They say that they do not know anything of their history, but add: that the Laotians are their brothers, therefore the Kas had compassion upon them and retired to the mountains, leaving the plain and the young shoots of bamboo to them."

10: d'Orleans--316-319 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 101, 173, 197, 771, 563 Ethnic subgroups

"The Meos live upon the eastern frontier of the kingdom, close to the Pouons plateau. I never met any in the town, but I had an opportunity of [pages 317 and 318 contain illustration] [319] conversing with one who was employed by M. Counillon, the French consul. He was a man of small stature, but well proportioned, with very pale complexion and regular features, and he told me that the Meos originally came from China and could make themselves understood by the caravan-men from the Yunnam. I gathered from his expressions that the Meos dialect is very like that of Van Bou, the word Meos, being rather the Laos designation, while they call themselves Mongs. I do not know whether this name has any connection with that of the ancient empire of the Mongs and the Möns of Burmah, but, according to the man with whom I conversed, the tribes to which he belongs have no religious creeds, though there is a word in his language which denotes the Deity."

10: d'Orleans--329-330 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 173, 436

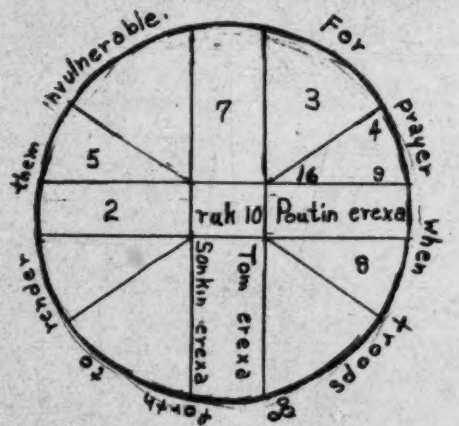
[LSS: in Luang Prabang] "The money in circulation is the English rupee, the Siamese tical, the piastre, native coins in copper and silver, shaped like canoes, and cowries strung together like chaplets, these latter coming by way of Burmah [330] or Siam from the Gulf of Bengal. I am told a curious story about one piece of money formerly coined in the Principality of Nan; the legend is that a queen who formerly ruled over the country, was so ugly that she could not find any one to fall in love with her, and that, in order to show that, however beautiful their features may be, all women are alike, she had a certain part of her body represented on this coin."

10: d'Orleans--331-332 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 173, 532, 778

"With the exception of the principal statue, the gods are not seated, and in this pagoda of Ouate Mai', the divinity held in the greatest veneration is one with outstretched hands as if in the act of giving the benediction. This is the Prabang or 'Buddha of the gold washings,' as he is made out of the gold found in the district. Tradition has it that this deity was brought here by the Laotians, when they emigrated from Muong-Theng, and that, after being carried off to Bangkok by the Siamese, it was brought back to Luang Prabang about twenty years ago. Another legend is that the statue was sent about 200 years ago by the king of Cambodia; but in any case it has given its name to the town, and it is covered with embroideries and chasubles, and placed in the recess of a reliquary to which diverse ornaments are suspended. In front of this is a movable bronze grating, ending in two dragons with intertwined tails, called Nâk, while to the left of the altar is a pulpit very similar to a sedan chair, from which the bonzes [332] give their lessons and recite their prayers."

10: d'Orleans--340-343 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos-1-2
116, ~~173,~~ 346, 777, 782

"Behind the altar [LSS: of the pagoda of Ouate Uisoune in Luang Prabang] is a semi-circular black stone upon a wooden pedestal and covered with Laotian inscriptions. Upon one side of this stone, it is related how the king of Muong Hay (near Muong Yan), having come for a festival with the king of Luang Prabang, left in the pagoda images of Buddha and books made of palm branches about 1198. The date is 1198 after Tiaoman Ta, who is supposed to have lived sixty-six centuries ago, so that it is one difficult to verify. Upon the reverse is a cabalistic sign which, worn by a soldier on the [pages 341 and 342 contain illustration] [343] breast, renders him invulnerable. This sign is as follows:-



10: d'Orleans--340-343 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos-2
116, 173, 346, 777, 782

The figures are in Laotian.
Ruk is an invocation to the gods.
Poutin erexa means (Pra god) pout, protect me.
Tom (in) erexa means (Teonda god) protect me.
Sonkin erexa means, bonzes protect me.
In this, as in the other temples are to be found the conduit for the holy water, the pulpit, the sunshades, the divinities which lay hands on the faithful, the adorned gods and the Buddhas with clasped hands (Pra Hopokoute), while in the adjoining pagoda of more recent construction are twenty rows of small gilt Buddhas placed close beside one another against the wall."

10: d'Orleans--367-368 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 133, 173

[LSS: between Luang Prabang and Paklay] "Some of the rocks have a story of their own. In the afternoon of the 20th we leave on our left a chalk cliff, which descends precipitously from a height of some 650 feet into the stream. On the sides of the mountain the trees manage to cling somehow or other, and numerous fissures, forming here and there [368] grottoes visible up to a great height, while black portions of the rock, harder than the rest and washed by the rain, hang in gigantic stalactites.

In vain I search with my glass the nooks and corners in the hope of finding a pagoda. There are no statues, but at about 160 feet from the top, on a white surface, I make out a sort of escutcheon, filled with small rows of Buddhas.

This rock is called Pakao (the white rock). A Kha, runs the tradition, having ventured upon the summit to look at the river, was carried over the edge by a strong wind, and touched the water. But far from being killed he swam for some miles down stream and was received by the canoes of a village. The inhabitants, marvelling at what had occurred, fell prostrate before the Kha, gave him presents and named him their king."

is [Illustration here] a duty for us, to restore the Khas to the normal status to which their imposing number in the total population as well as the special qualities which they possess give them a right. 000

Once emancipated from their strict servitude and from the rapacity of the Laotian and Thai mandarins, and once commanded by leaders who have been chosen by them and from members of their own race, the Khas will rise rapidly and, as [136] time passes, will certainly give a most effective impetus to the development of our possession's riches.

Moreover, they have not lost the tradition of their original status. They are conscious of their own antiquity and say, not without scorn, that the peoples who are newcomers to Indo-China are only their younger brothers. Their race has fallen back on its own resources, has divided into small groups, has opposed a ~~force of absolute~~ inertia to the invader and the conqueror and has thus kept itself free for many long centuries from mixtures with other peoples. Today there are still many descendants of these first possessors of the land and one may find in them, in a latent state, the energy and courage so conspicuously absent in the conquering races which drove them back to the mountains and reduced them to a kind of slavery or ostracism from which the latter greatly profited. 563 173

Nor can it be denied that the Khas are capable of moral and material improvement. There are many, for example, who have adopted Buddhism (1), and still others Catholicism (2). These Khas 563 795 797

(1) Khouène Khas and Khmou Khas.

(2) Bahnar Khas, Rognaos, etc.

have yielded up to persuasion and gentle treatment what they refused for many centuries to constraint and force. The future is therefore encouraging.

What is more, the question of emancipating the Khas has left the domain of theory and pure speculation. In 1894 M. Macey, one of our political agents, emancipated the Khas in the territories of Xieng-Khong, Muong-Mugne, Poukha, etc. The terrain was well chosen for the experiment, since this daring attempt was applied precisely to the Khouène, Khmou and Lemet Kha groups whose moral regeneration had already begun through the practice of Buddhism. 563 177

China and Indo-China (1).

[113] (1) E. Picanon, Le Laos français. 1901, Challamel. [Paris.]

II

173 563 144 Laos, Thais and Khas. Although the Laotian legends attribute the same origin to all of these (Muong-Thang or Dien-Bien-Phu) and say that they all came from the same "gourd" (Nam-Tao-Phoun), it is hardly likely that the Laotians and the Khas have a common origin. Indeed, the characteristics which serve to distinguish the two races are too numerous and too marked, both from the point of view of the racial types themselves and as regards language, mores and religious beliefs.

144 174 Nor can it be affirmed that the Khas are the representatives of the aboriginal population, for before any of their people had mounted the throne of Luang-Prabang, six kings foreign to their race had already occupied it--if we may regard the list of the first kings of the land which is preserved in the Phong-Sa Va-Dan (annals of the kingdom) as correct--and of these conquering princes the first is said to have come from India, and the second from Cambodia.

In any case, the Khas are said to have preceded the Laotians in the land, and it was not until the reign of their fourth and last king that they are supposed to have been conquered and driven out or enslaved by the Laotians, who had come down from Dien-Bien-Phu. [609] Since that time, and despite many revolts of which the last is almost recent, the Khas have never ceased being "a folk talliable and liable to forced labor at pleasure" for their vanquishers, and their name has become a synonym for a low person or slave in the current idiom. [561] Not until 1895 were the Khas once and for all freed--freed is perhaps not the word, for in the strict sense they were never slaves--or at least summoned to enjoy a system of rule similar to that of the other natives and which left no margin for arbitrariness and vexations.

173 In designating Dien-Bien-Phu as the cradle of the Laotian people, or at least in attributing to the Laotians and the Thais a common origin, legend seems to be in agreement with reality. There are indeed many points of resemblance and contact between the two peoples. The type is invariably the same, although finer in the native of Luang-Prabang than in the native of Lai-Chau or Dien-Bien-Phu. Not more 175 than two hundred years ago the Laotians still wore, like the black 291 Thais, the Annamite costume and their hair wound in a coil. It 177 was doubtless after contact with the Siamese--who had themselves

has created a center for the study of Laos which will enable the country to be better known and better loved. From these works new elements will arise which will serve as a base for more detailed works which the reader can study to his advantage, while awaiting the publication of a new edition of this modest tract, whose only ambition is to increase the understanding of the habits, customs, and traditions of the Muong Lao. 114

May we express here our profound gratitude to His Royal Highness Prince Savang Vathana, heir to the throne, for the friendly interest he has ever shown in our work. We express our thanks to His Highness Boun Oum, Prince of Champassak, who has kindly pointed out to us monuments till now unknown. To L. L. E. E. Thao Kou Abhay, president of the King's Council and to Thao Nhouy Abhay, former minister, we are also indebted for certain information for which we are grateful. We thank Mr. Michaudel for the friendly and constant help he has given to the French School [5] of the Far East in Laos, and we also thank Mr. Malleret, director of this school, who has made useful suggestions. Finally, we express our thanks to Prince Souvanna Phouma and to the Princess for the consideration they have shown us on many occasions and for the encouragement they have given to this work. 122

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[7]

HISTORICAL SKETCH

"...Then, Phou Lan Xon, messenger of Phaya Then, king of the sky, took a red-hot iron and pierced the gourd. Immediately a crowd of men sprang forth. There were so many that the opening was not large enough to let them through, so larger openings were made with scissors." 173 563

Such is the origin of the two groups of people of Laos. The Khas, who came out of the opening made by the red-hot iron, were blackened by the cinders; the Thais, who came through holes made by scissors, kept their fair complexion.

However original, this charming legend is far from giving us precise information about the first inhabitants of Laos. As a famous scholar has already bitterly remarked, it is the beginnings about which we know the least. Alas, Laos is no exception to this rule. The historian who attempts to retrace the events which have occurred in this country from the origins to the 13th century, at which period documents with substantial proofs are available, finds himself in much the same position as an ant lost in a sieve. The holes are more 127